

Wildlife Program

Week of January 30 – February 5, 2017

WOLF ACTIVITIES

Region 1 Wolf Activities

Wolf Internal Group Meeting: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Bennett and other members of the WDFW Wolf Internal Group met and covered recommendations to the lethal removal protocol, current science review, data usage, and range riders.

Wolf Advisory Group Meeting: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Bennett and other WDFW staff members participated in a Wolf Advisory Group meeting where Profanity Peak lessons learned, revisions to the lethal removal protocol, and public outreach were discussed.

Oregon Collared Wolf: Biologist Earl and Natural Resource Technician Wade stayed in contact with livestock producers in Asotin and Garfield counties as collared wolves moved amongst their calving and winter feeding areas.

Wolf Sightings: Natural Resource Technician Wade received three reports of a group or groups of three wolves seen in several locations in Garfield County.

Tracks: Natural Resource Technician Wade responded to a report of large tracks in the snow in Pomeroy. Local law enforcement determined the tracks to have come from two or three large canines/wolves. When Wade inspected the tracks, the snow melt made it difficult to determine if they were left by large canines or possibly cougars. Wade conferred with other conflict staff members from Region 1 on the issue.



Tracks in the snow

REGION 1

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Project Planning: Biologist Baarstad ordered Ponderosa Pine seedlings from the University of Idaho forest nursery with \$1500 in National Wild Turkey Federation Superfund grant money. The trees will be planted on a Hunt by Written Permission property near Fruitland in April to reforest the site following the Carpenter Road fire of 2015. Baarstad discussed project details with the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and a private forestry consultant, who are assisting the landowner with implementation. Baarstad discussed habitat development strategies with Biologist Thorne Hadley.

GOAL 2: PROVIDE SUSTAINABLE FISHING, HUNTING AND OTHER WILDLIFE-RELATED RECREATIONAL AND COMMERCIAL EXPERIENCES

Deer Captures: With a large crew of WDFW staff members (Biologists Annemarie Prince, Carrie Lowe, Mike Atamian, Deer Specialist Sara Hansen, Ungulate Researcher Melia Devivo, Veterinarian Kristin Mansfield) and the assistance of biologists from the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), Kalispel and Colville tribes, University of Washington, and pilot Jason Moorhead, 20 adult does were sampled and fitted with GPS collars. Meanwhile, District Wildlife Biologist Dana Base worked with former Ungulate Research Associate Woody Myers and technicians in the second round of white-tailed deer captures in GMUs 117 and 121. Permissions were obtained from private landowners to set up clover traps and bait stations where deer are wintering. Traps were deployed at three new sites. These deer trapping efforts are part of the larger predator-prey project initiated this winter within northeast and north-central Washington.

Predator Prey Study: Biologists Atamian and Lowe assisted with a mule deer drive net capture in the Methow Wildlife Area all week.



Mule deer buck after being released



Drive nets and handlers waiting for deer



Drive net set up



Mule deer doe getting radio collar



Mule deer being positioned for release

Freshly Killed Deer: Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Palmer investigated a location near the pheasant release site at Sherman Creek Wildlife Area, where he had seen an eagle fly up, to find a recently killed white-tailed deer being fed on by several eagles and ravens. It appeared the deer had been killed by coyotes within the previous 24 hours. The snow conditions are favorable for the predators, as they can run on top of the crusted snow while the deer break through.

REGION 2

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Wolverine Management: Biologist Fitkin and USFS Biologist Rohrer continued the second round of camera station checks in District 6 for the Western States Wolverine Conservation Project Baseline Survey and our success continues. Our Washington Pass area camera captured hundreds photos of two wolverines together feeding, wrestling, rolling in scent attractants, and just hanging out in front of the camera. It appears to be the same two animals that visited the Twisp River camera early in the winter. DNA from ample hair samples should confirm the identity.





Rolling, feeding, wrestlin', and chillin' wolverines – Photo by WDFW remote camera

Predator-Prey Research Project: Biologists Fitkin and Heinlen, along with many other WDFW staff members, USFS staff, and volunteers (more than 50 in all) spent most of the week participating in a mule deer drive-net capture effort. We deployed GPS collars on 20 does despite logistical challenges associated with access, snow conditions, and below zero morning

temperatures. Project staff members consider this pilot capture effort to have been a significant success, and lessons learned will set us up for an even more productive session next year. Many heartfelt thanks to everyone involved, and a special thanks to those individuals that came all the way from other regions to assist. Much appreciation is due to Biologist Heinlen for handling the myriad behind the scenes organizational logistics that make events like this possible. Tremendous thanks to Specialist Hansen for leading the charge and tirelessly shouldering a ridiculous workload to make this all happen. Individual kudos to volunteer Carmen Vanbianchi for being the most badass deer wrangler despite being the smallest member of the crew, and to fitness inspiration Biologist Bergh for her ability to skate ski several miles in the dark with a headlamp in single digit temperatures after a full day of deer captures (who does that?!).



Mule deer group being evaluated for a capture attempt – Photo by Scott Fitkin



Staff and volunteers meet near Pipestone Canyon on the Methow Wildlife Area – Photo by Justin Haug



Crews putting up capture nets and processing a mule deer – Photos by Justin Haug

Lynx Monitoring: Biologist Fitkin did a midseason check on one of three lynx cameras deployed in the Washington Pass cell. Still no lynx thus far, but the camera caught some amazing photos of attempted predation in progress.



A marten unsuccessfully pursues a snowshoe hare — Photo by WDFW/WSU remote cameras

Pygmy Rabbit Winter Burrow Surveys: Coordinator Gallie conducted burrow surveys in Sheep Canyon, looking to determine if the recent detection in this area, our farthest known occurrence from the release area, is multiple or just a few rabbits. Getting assistance from Biologists Comstock and Rowan, and Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Biologist Munzing, we completed nearly all the suitable habitat patches in this area. We located only three active burrows, all within a relatively tight cluster. Given the activity pattern we observed in the snow, one or two rabbits occupy this small patch. The remaining habitat is marginal, mostly occurring on DNR land. We have yet to survey the drainage that connects this habitat patch with the many occupied areas of Sagebrush Flats Wildlife Area, which is most likely how these rabbits got there in the first place. Hopefully we will find additional burrows there, but as it stands, Sheep Canyon holds only one small cluster of active burrows.



Sheep Canyon pygmy rabbit

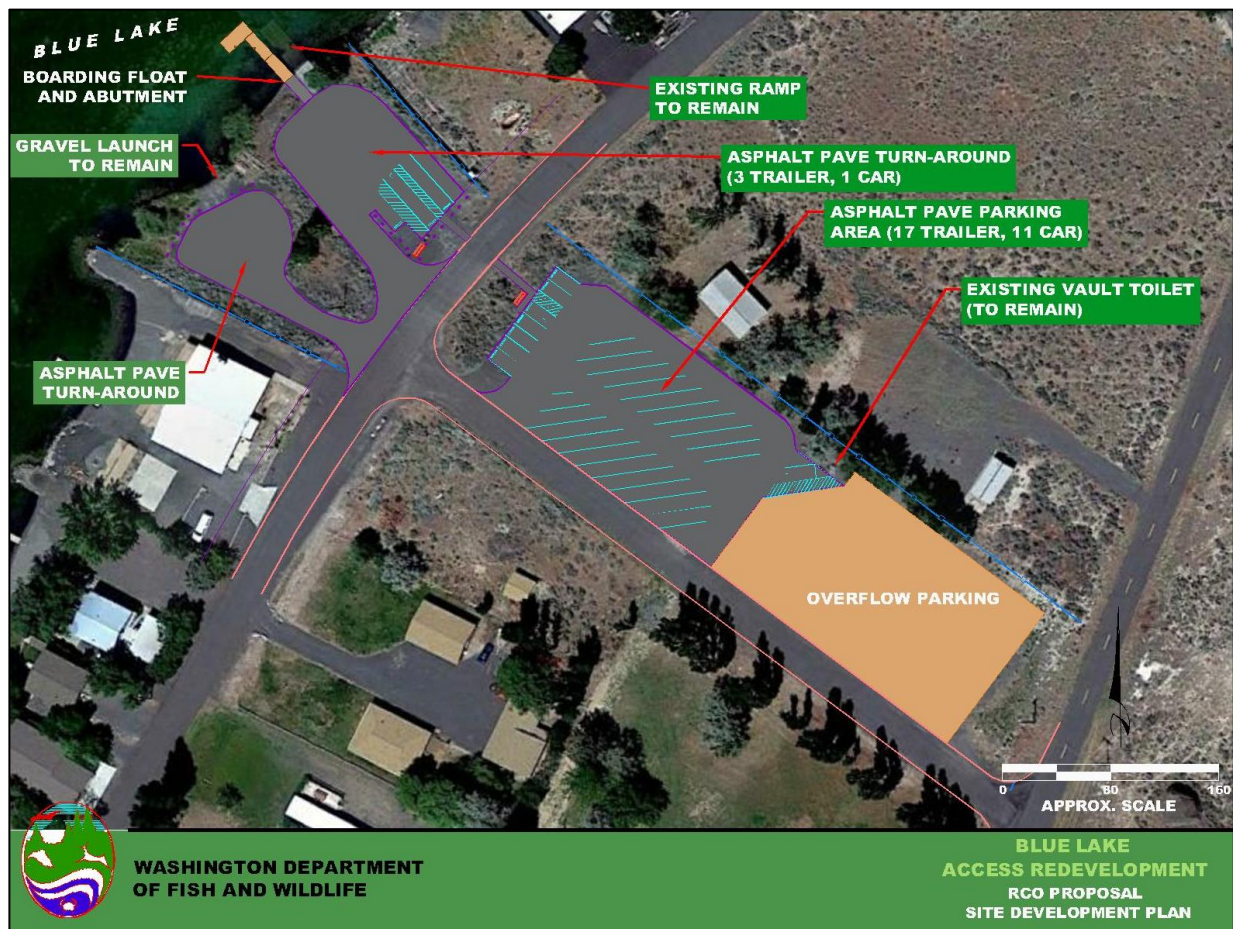


Biologist Gallie checking out habitat within Sheep Canyon

GOAL 2: PROVIDE SUSTAINABLE FISHING, HUNTING AND OTHER WILDLIFE-RELATED RECREATIONAL AND COMMERCIAL EXPERIENCES

Access

Blue Lake RCO: Access Manager Harmon traveled to Olympia this week to give his final PowerPoint Presentation on Blue Lake access redevelopment. The RCO grant proposal includes installing a boarding float, asphalt launch areas, parking area, and chain link fence along the property boundaries.



REGION 3

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Areas

Colockum Wildlife Area:

Snow continues to fall, with accumulations over three feet at the 2400 feet elevation level on the Colockum.

Part of a flock of 100 wild turkeys wintering in the Colockum Creek drainage



L.T. Murray Wildlife Area: Manager Babik met with members from the Washington State Beaver Working Group to discuss revisions to the upcoming HB1257, as well as the internal WDFW Standard Operating Procedure for Relocating Beavers.

Elk Baiting: Natural Resource Technicians Leuck and Hill baited elk return gates above Robinson and Manastash canyons. There are about 25 elk on the wrong side of the fence in Robinson and about 35 in the Manastash area. It was discovered that the return gates had been taken off their hinges and removed, allowing the elk easy access to the wrong side of the fence. Leuck replaced the gates and wired them up.



Elk gate off its hinges



Baiting the return gates with the tracked quad



Another elk return gate off its hinges

Wildlife Area Maintenance: Natural Resource Technician Hill closed the roads at the pump house and corrals entrances to the Whiskey Dick Wildlife Area for the winter elk closure.



Closed road at the corrals entrance



Closed road at the pump house entrance

Winter Elk Feeding: Numbers grew this week with 821 elk counted in Watt and 650 estimated in Robinson. There were no mortalities and the elk look to be in good to fair health. The week started off with snow on Tuesday followed by cold but clear days. Highs were in the lower 30s and lows were in the single digits. Snow is in the forecast through Tuesday next week, with it warming up in the later part of the week. Highs are in the upper 30s and lows are in the lower 20s.

Oak Creek Wildlife Area: Oak Creek staff members continued with winter feeding operations at all feed sites. Elk numbers continue to stay at high levels at all feed sites. Snow fell during the week, requiring snow shoveling and plowing. On Sunday, about 8-10 inches of snow fell, requiring a lot of time on snow removal and making access to feed sites difficult.

View from the Cowiche feed truck, headed back to the barn after feeding. Cleman Mountain is in the distance.



Hay Delivery: Natural Resource Technician Kass delivered another load of hay to the Inyouse's in the Nile. They are currently feeding about 80 elk per day.

Peak Elk Counts for Week

Headquarters – 1093

Junction – 241

Nile – 380

Sheep – 200 (11 elk)

Cowiche – 1650

Winter Weather: Temperatures were seasonal during the week, with lows in the upper 10s to lower 20s. There were several inches of new snow accumulation during the week. On Sunday, we received 8-10 inches of new snow. Elk are in seasonally fair condition. During the week, three calves and one cow died at the HQ, and a cow died the Cowiche feed site.

Wenas Wildlife Area Mellotte Feed Site: Elk numbers seem to be fluctuating between 800 and 900 animals, which is 200-300 animals less than normal for this time of year. Snow continues to accumulate around the feed site, with some new snow falling on Tuesday and Saturday. Manager Confer Morris fed elk on Sunday to give Assistant Manager Taylor a much deserved day off. Elk are in seasonally fair condition.

Winter Weather: Temperatures continued to be below normal, with highs in the upper 20s to low 30s, and lows in the teens and single digits. Conditions were mostly dry, with snow flurries on Tuesday and snow showers beginning on Saturday, which are expected to continue through Monday morning. A chance for snow continues through the week, with high temperatures in the 30s increasing into the 40s by the weekend, and lows in the teens to low 30s.

Sunnyside Wildlife Area: Assistant Manager Kaelber surveyed Mesa, Windmill, and the Bailie Youth Ranch for sick or dead waterfowl. He did not observe any sick or dead birds.

Wildlife Management

Avian Cholera: District Wildlife Biologist Fidorra continued to coordinate with WDFW biologists and veterinary staff members, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), USDA-APHIS, and the National Wildlife Health Center to respond to an outbreak of avian cholera in Walla Walla County and Tri-cities. Fidorra collected carcasses for disposal and contacted members of the public and landowners in response to outbreak reports. Carcass removal is an important aspect in controlling this disease. Fidorra worked with USDA-AHPIS to collect samples for AI testing and also shipped various specimens to the National Wildlife Health Center. Fidorra has collect over 1800 carcasses since the outbreak began on January 20, and he will continue to collect carcasses and monitor locations for outbreaks.



Lethargic mallard found at a pond where over 150 scavenged carcasses were collected, presumably the result of ongoing avian cholera outbreak



District Biologist Fidorra preparing samples of owls, hawks, and an eagle collected near Tri-cities to determine if deaths are associated with the local avian cholera outbreak

Hanford Elk Survey: District Wildlife Biologist Fidorra finished entering data from the Hanford elk survey. A total of 1,076 elk were detected during the survey. Fidorra will work with USFWS to analyze data using a sightability model and test additional models as appropriate.

Washington Ground Squirrel: District Wildlife Biologist Fidorra worked with WDFW staff members on plans for the 2017 statewide Washington Ground Squirrel Survey coming up this spring. Fidorra will assist District 5 on surveys of the Potholes region and is coordinating assistance from USFWS and volunteers.

Cougar Seal: District Wildlife Biologist sealed a cougar harvested in Spokane County.

Hunter Education: Biologist Bernatowicz researched non-toxic shot/bullet information, including that used in Arizona and California. The information was put into a draft PowerPoint. At this time, there is no plan for an education campaign past Hunter Education instructors.

GOAL 2: PROVIDE SUSTAINABLE FISHING, HUNTING AND OTHER WILDLIFE-RELATED RECREATIONAL AND COMMERCIAL EXPERIENCES

Wildlife Areas

Sunnyside Wildlife Area: Manager Buser and District Fish Biologist Hoffarth worked together on a presentation for the Columbia Basin Flycaster's Club. The presentation will cover fishing opportunities in the lower Columbia Basin and highlight Powerline Lake at the Windmill Ranch Unit of the wildlife area.

Oak Creek Wildlife Area: Discover Pass compliance was fair over the weekend. Park Aide Wells contacted each vehicle as it pulled into the parking lot, but did not actively sell passes.

Instead people were directed to the Iron Ranger. Over the weekend, 181 vehicles arrived with Discover Passes, 27 arrived with Access Passes, and 44 purchased day passes on site. A total of 86 vehicles were directed to the Iron Ranger to pay. Nine vehicles chose not to pay and left the area.

Wenas Wildlife Area: Manager Confer Morris and Assistant Manager Taylor reviewed the Wenas green dot map for changes and updates. Confer Morris attended a Green Dot RMA meeting with Region 3 Land Division and DNR staff members to discuss updates and modifications to green dot maps.

Manastash Ridge Trails: Manager Confer Morris and Biologist Longoria attended a sign committee meeting for the Manastash Ridge Trails Coalition (MRTC). Confer Morris provided examples of Tread Lightly signs and DNR Recreation Specialist Margheim showed some signs found in their sign catalog. The group also worked on layout for a sign displaying information about the planning process and discussed how best to use the kiosk at the bottom of the trails.

L.T. Murray Wildlife Area: Manager Babik created an outline for an ALEA grant to potentially fund the construction of the Watchable Wildlife Tower at Joe Watt feeding site in partnership with the Kittitas Field and Stream Club.

Wildlife Management

2-A Ranch: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand met with the new landowner who purchased the 2-A Ranch in eastern Yakima County. This ranch is part of the Silver Dollar Association Landowner Hunting Permit (LHP) and the new owner is evaluating whether or not he would like to continue in the LHP at this time. Contract materials, permit allocation, and general LHP guidelines were discussed.

GOAL 3: PROMOTE A HEALTHY ECONOMY, PROTECT COMMUNITY CHARACTER, MAINTAIN AN OVERALL HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE, AND DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE

Wildlife Areas

Oak Wildlife Area: Regional Program Manager McCorquodale hosted a home-schooling group from Selah interested in wildlife management and elk biology. McCorquodale gave a guided tour of the feeding operation, providing natural history information and answering questions about elk and other regional wildlife.

L.T. Murray Wildlife Area: Manager Babik met with Regional Program Manager McCorquodale, other wildlife area managers, and DNR to discuss revisions to the Road Management Area Maps.

Outreach: Manager Babik gathered educational specimens and created an outline of talking points for her staff in preparation for their outreach to nearly 100 children next week.

Wildlife Management

Coyote Predation: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand assisted two large cattle operations in Benton and southern Yakima counties with calving losses due to predation from coyotes. Combined with calf losses from coyotes, the harsh cold winter weather conditions have made calving even more difficult this year. Active coyote hunting and potential aerial gunning by USDA are being initiated.

Deer Damage: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand continued to monitor a deer damage complaint received last week at an orchard in southern Benton County. Heavy hazing pressure and non-lethal techniques such as LP gas cannons are deployed in an effort to reduce damage impacts.

Elk Activity: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand surveyed for elk activity off the Hanford site near Highway 240 at Horn Rapids. Over 500 elk were observed on the Arid Lands Ecology Reserve, but none near the Hanford border.

Fladry Fencing: Conflict Specialist Wetzel set up 3D fladry fencing at a location in Cle Elum where a herd of elk had been entering a barn and getting into a hay feeding operation. Bulls had been bold enough to jump fencing and aggressively feed on hay fed to livestock at that location.

3D fladry installed to deter elk from jumping into livestock feeding area

Elk Hazing: Conflict Specialist Wetzel used Fairview Permit master hunters again this week to coordinate with landowners at one site in Cle Elum, three sites in Tappico, and several sites in and around Thorp. Master hunters hazed elk nonlethally in Vantage, and the elk have temporarily left the area. Efforts are continuing in an effort to keep elk north of Vantage Highway and away from agriculture areas. Scary Man, fused salutes, master hunter hazing, landowner permits, and landowner elk hazing are deployed in the area.



Hauling Hay: Technicians Leuck and Hill hauled hay to many locations along the L.T. Murray elk fence. By baiting the re-entry gates, many elk returned to the L.T. Murray side of the fence. Additionally, many gates were frozen shut or vandalized, but were repaired and re-opened. This effort has been extremely helpful in reducing elk conflict in those areas. Help from the L.T. Murray staff is much appreciated.

GOAL 4: BUILD AN EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT ORGANIZATION BY SUPPORTING OUR WORKFORCE, IMPROVING BUSINESS PROCESSES, AND INVESTING IN TECHNOLOGY

Wildlife Areas

Colockum Wildlife Area: Snow continues to fall on the Colockum, keeping employees busy plowing snow around the headquarters.

Assistant Manager Hagan plowing snow at the Colockum Wildlife Area Headquarters



Washington Ag Safety Day: Colockum staff members Lopushinsky and Hagan attended the 11th annual Washington Ag Safety Day in Wenatchee this week, gaining more recertification credits towards their pesticide applicators licenses.

Sunnyside Wildlife Area: Manager Buser participated in the live webcast of The Society for Range Management's annual conference. The conference had a special symposium on impacts of woodland expansion into rangelands of the west and the relationship to prairie grouse species.

REGION 4

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Wolverine: District 14 completed a camera check of a remote camera in the Twin Sisters area. This camera effort is part of a multi-state project focused on conducting field surveys to document the current distribution and genetics of wolverines across Washington, Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming, and will result in several datasets obtained in a collaborative fashion. No wolverine images were captured on this camera during December or January.

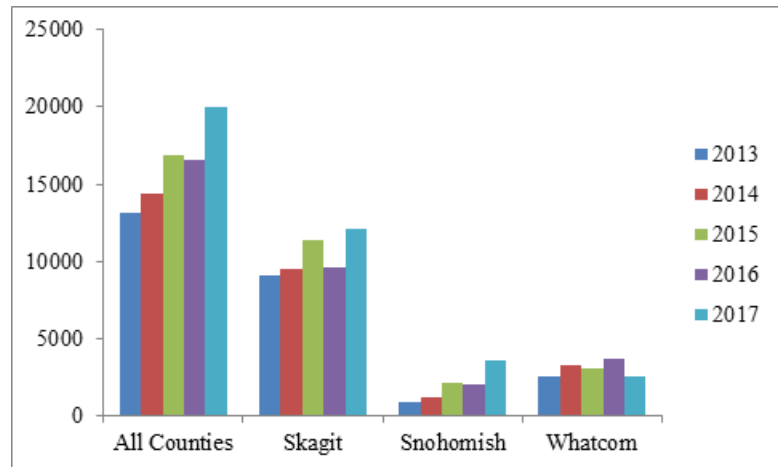
Swans: District 14 completed data entry and analysis from the recent driving swan surveys in Whatcom, Skagit, King, Snohomish, Island, and San Juan counties. These surveys have been ongoing since 2005 and involve WDFW personnel, partners from Puget Sound Energy, citizen volunteers, and the Northwest Swan Conservation Association. Overall swan numbers have increased from 16,552 to 19,982 over the 2016 to 2017 period. All counties had an increase in swan numbers except for Whatcom County, which has an increased occurrence of frozen lakes and ponds this year due to low temperatures.

Swan survey results from 2013-2017

Swan Mortality and Morbidity:

The swan hotline is slowing down and many of the roosts that were producing sick and/or dead swans earlier in the season have become very sporadic. Biologist Zimmerman retrofitted one of the boats for the use of a new motor and dropped off another boat, which had a crack on the bottom

that needed to be welded. Zimmerman met and picked up a swan Martha Jordan had received from Sequim and took it to the Whatcom Wildlife Rehab Center. Samples were taken from 18 birds. A public television segment by Earth Fix about swans and lead was released and can be viewed at: <https://check.kcts9.org/owa/#path=/mail>.



	Lead suspect	Powerline suspect	Other trauma	Undetermined	Feather Pile	Total
This week	3	4		1		8
Clallam	1					1
King	1					1
Whatcom	34	30	4	5	3	76
Skagit	41	31	3	7	8	90
Snohomish	8	22	1	1		32
Totals	85	82	8	13	11	200

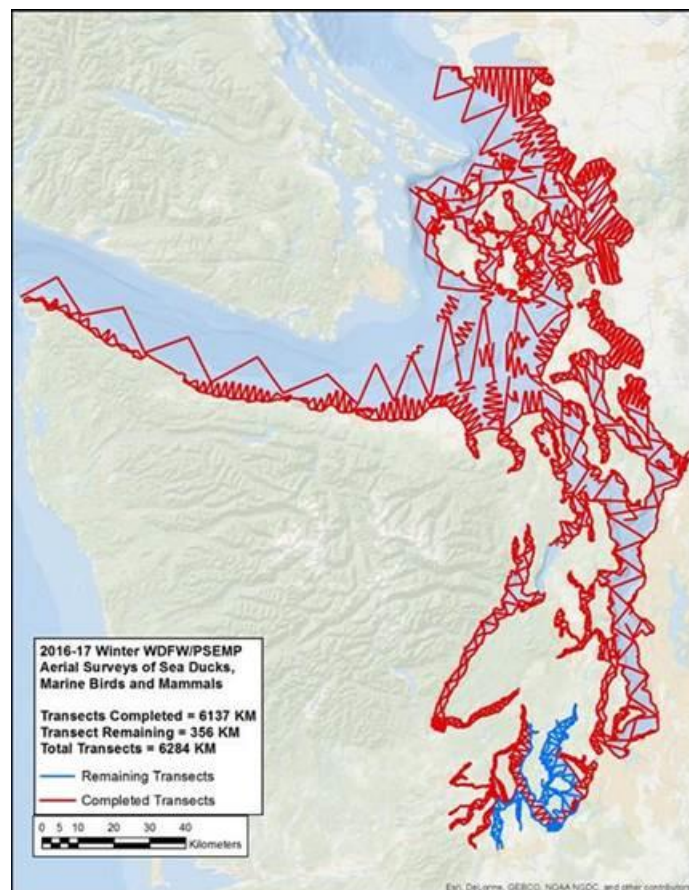
Marine Waterfowl Surveys: District 13, along with the Marine Waterfowl Specialist and staff members from Olympia completed the aerial portion of the 2016-2017 winter marine waterfowl surveys. This 25-year continuous survey looks at the long-term trends of wintering marine waterfowl in the Salish Sea. Among the longest-running surveys of its kind, the survey also provides long-term trend data on most other bird and mammal species, both nongame and game, residing in the marine environment during the winter in Washington. Waterfowl data are used in determining and setting take amounts and seasons in the Pacific Flyway. With only two short days with permissible flying weather this week, we were able to complete the remaining small

portion of south Puget Sound. Overall, nearly 6,300 kilometers of transect lines were flown this season. Transcription of the >15,000 records is proceeding.

Once again, these difficult surveys could not be safely accomplished without the professional and dedicated pilots, mechanics, and staff members at Kenmore Air. We also acknowledge the invaluable assistance provided by our dedicated flight following staff, without whom these flights would not be possible.

The remaining transects (in blue) completed this week

East/West Bear Project: Biologist Smith continued to assist Bear and Cougar Specialist Beausoleil and Biologist Maletzke with locating dens, placing cameras to document emergence and cub numbers, recollaring/adjusting collars on sub-adult males, recollaring/adjusting collars on adult females, and potentially collaring yearling cubs. Work on the west side is nearing completion for this winter.



WREHITC Meeting: Biologist Smith accompanied Regional Program Manager Calkins, Specialist Hoenes, Biologist Tirhi, and Conflict Specialist Blankenship at a meeting of the White River Elk Herd Interagency Technical Committee hosted by the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe. The meeting included representatives from USFS, National Park Service (NPS), DNR, and private timber. Population status, survey plans, harvest/hunting regulations, habitat conditions/enhancements, invasive species treatments, highway mortality, and damage trends/responses were discussed.

White-nose Syndrome Monitoring, Bat Health, and Bat Conservation: District 12 discussed winter roosting bats and potential testing with Wildlife Health personnel. Further discussion is needed to provide a uniform general guidance effort and drive efficiency for instances where a bat shows itself in winter and may or may not be worth sampling.

Please report bat roosts and sick or dead bats at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/health/wns>.

Landscape Amphibian Occurrence Monitoring: District 12 worked with Wildlife Program Citizen Science Coordinator Connally, Habitat Senior Scientist Hayes, Woodland Park Zoo

Community Outreach Coordinator Mears, Woodland Park Zoo Community Outreach Manager Weiss, and Woodland Park Zoo Herp Curator Pramuk to launch the 2017 Amphibians of Washington monitoring project. Over 70 Woodland Park Zoo volunteers came to a class/new pilot iNaturalist data user interface training (as well as Biologist Anderson going through biosecurity “show and tell” due to field conditions not providing for a planned field practicum – the site was completely frozen, under rain and occasional gusts of wind). The training was very successful, and it was the largest group we’ve had over six seasons. The project aims to provide baseline amphibian occurrence (Stillwater breeding amphibians as focus but also incidental observation) data for query by the department and other institutions while engaging citizenry and other partners in amphibian conservation efforts within our state. Participants are trained in non-intrusive survey techniques, ID, conservation issues, biosecurity needs, partnering with landowners, and other related topics. Currently, the project focuses on King and Snohomish counties. Many thanks to Citizen Science Coordinator Connally, Habitat Scientist Hayes, and all the Woodland Park Zoo staff members - all of whom worked some pretty long hours to get this together with changes that have been implemented this season. District 12 would like to extend thanks to the support of Regional Wildlife, HQ Diversity, and Habitat that have assisted and continue to assist in partnerships involving the project. Thank you, all!



Dr. Jennifer Pramuk, Herp Curator with Woodland Park Zoo, discussing amphibian conservation informally before some of the other students arrive. At one point, the class was standing room only when “veteran” surveyors showed for our new iNaturalist training section, biosecurity needs, and site selection – Photo by Biologist Anderson, WDFW

Wildlife Areas

Agricultural Leases: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm completed the annual accounting for lease excise taxes. Manager Boehm met with Sno-Valley Farms and the Sky-Valley Tractor Club to review the reports and tax payment. Agricultural leases provide forage and cover for wildlife, as well as invasive weed control.

Spencer Island Restoration Project: Projects Coordinator Brokaw had a de-briefing meeting with Habitat Program to discuss the open house from the week before. He also prepared an open house summary document that includes a compilation of input received. Once finalized, that document will be added to the project webpage. For more information about the proposed project or to fill out a survey about how you currently use the property, please visit the project webpage at http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife_areas/snoqualmie/spencer_island.php or contact Loren Brokaw at loren.brokaw@dfw.wa.gov.

NOAA Grant Opportunity: Projects Coordinator Brokaw participated in a webinar to learn more about a NOAA Coastal Resiliency grant opportunity. The department is considering developing two applications for this grant competition, which includes work on Region 4 Wildlife Areas, including projects on Spencer Island and along Wiley Slough.

Private Lands/Access Management

Migratory Bird Habitat Project Proposal Submissions: Private Lands Supervisory Biologist Caldwell and Private Lands Biologist Wingard submitted several Migratory Bird Habitat Project Proposals. These proposals would provide a considerable amount of early and later winter food for migratory birds. These projects would also enhance recreational aspects (e.g. wildlife viewing) of sites during this timeframe.

GOAL 2: PROVIDE SUSTAINABLE FISHING, HUNTING AND OTHER WILDLIFE-RELATED RECREATIONAL AND COMMERCIAL EXPERIENCES

Wildlife Management

Hunting Recommendations: District 14 completed recommendations for the 2017 North Cascades Elk herd hunting regulations. The harvest recommendations were discussed with Point Elliot Treaty Tribes policy and technical personnel.

Hunting and Harvestable Species Management: District 12 provided questions regarding district hunts of big, small, and furbearer species, as well as “educational collection” of wildlife. SCP Coordinator Thompson provided follow-up with the inquiring party. A dead mountain goat was reported to District 12 from a location in Snoqualmie Pass area, and Olympia and tribal co-management teams were contacted regarding any interest in the dead animal.

Wildlife Areas

Snoqualmie Hunting Units: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm visited the hunting units to remove waterfowl-related hunting signage. WDFW signs were also removed from the leased parking lot at Ebey Island (middle lot), ending public access to the unit from this location. The property is privately owned, but allows public access seasonally through a lease arrangement. Enforcement and the landowner were also notified.

Corson Preserve: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm worked with CAMP and Real Estate Services to work on early steps to improve public access to this unit.

Hamilton Landing Boat Launch Project: Projects Coordinator Brokaw traveled to the Natural Resources Building in Olympia to give a presentation on the project to the scoring panel of the Boating Facilities Program. The scoring panel will now rank all of the projects to determine a subset of projects that will receive funding.

Whatcom Wildlife Area Hunting Access: With the ending of the waterfowl hunting season, Manager Kessler closed and locked access gates and parking areas on several of the units of the

wildlife area. Three parking areas, including two boat launches at the Lake Terrell Unit, were closed to focus the recreational use to the main headquarters parking area. One car top boat launch was closed on the Nooksack Unit.

Tennant Lake Boardwalk Reopening: With the ending of the waterfowl hunting season, Manager Kessler coordinated with Whatcom County Parks and reopened the Tennant Lake boardwalk for public use. A master hunter volunteer worked for several hours cutting down overhanging trees and vegetation, and raked and swept the boardwalk clean on the first day it was open.



Tenant Lake boardwalk

Future bat exclusion: District 13 met with County Parks to discuss spring sampling protocols and tour a building that houses a large bat maternity colony. County Parks would like to

exclude the bats from the building, but are sympathetic to our project and want to help in any ways they can. Discussions regarding delaying exclusion plans are underway. The group also discussed placement of a bat house to encourage bats to leave the building at some point in the future.

Hovander bat roost

BP Post Hunting Season Review Meeting: Manager Kessler met with the Environmental Land Manager and the head of Security at the BP refinery to discuss the just ended hunting seasons on the BP Unit. No problems with the deer, pheasant, or waterfowl seasons were noted. The BP



managers appreciated the continued good cooperation and coordination with the department and the hunting public.

Winter Storm Cleanup: Due to the snow and frozen rain storm, Manager Kessler worked to cut down and remove several trees from the roads into and through the Lake Terrell Unit. As the new week started with another snow storm, more cleanup work is sure to be needed. Lake Terrell and Tennant Lake are now also freezing up again.

Private Lands/Access Management

Private Industrial Timber Company Meeting: Private Lands Supervisory Biologist Caldwell and Private Lands Biologist Wingard met with a private industrial timber company to review department access management and future coordination efforts, as well as discuss any issues reported in 2016.

Wildlife Viewing Coordination and Site Opening: Private Lands Supervisory Biologist Caldwell and Private Lands Biologist Wingard met with a private landowner to sign him up for a one-year contract for wildlife viewing. This access opportunity will allow members of the public access to a tidally influenced area in Skagit County and provide exceptional wildlife viewing for an array of wildlife and plant species.

Biologist Wingard and Biologist DeBruyn partnered to hold a grand opening party for a new private lands wildlife viewing opportunity in the heart of the Samish Flats. Nearly 70 people braved the weather and stopped by over the afternoon. Biologists DeBruyn, Biologist Wingard, and Biologist Caldwell were at the site welcoming people and providing information about the program and property and about the wildlife in the area. Many of the visitors were newer bird watchers and were glad for the opportunity to look through high-powered spotting scopes provided by WDFW for the event. A class group from the University of Washington stopped by to see the new site and there was a birding tour from Falcon Research Group as well. The tour groups were excited to have another place to safely park and view wildlife in the area. Twenty-one individual species were spotted that afternoon. The highlight of the day was watching bald eagles successfully hunt green-winged teal. Another highlight was a local falconer bringing two falcons to see up close and personal.



A large group on a cold, wet day enjoying the new Private Lands Wildlife Viewing opportunity on the Samish Flats – Photos by R. Wingard



A young male gyrfalcon is eager to go for a fly – Photo by E. Martin

GOAL 3: PROMOTE A HEALTHY ECONOMY, PROTECT COMMUNITY CHARACTER, MAINTAIN AN OVERALL HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE, AND DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE

Wildlife Conflict Management

Spring Bear Hunt Coordination: Wildlife Conflict Supervisor Caldwell coordinated with the Region 4 District Biologist and Communications Specialist Trena on preparing congratulatory letters for spring bear hunt permit drawees. These letters will be sent to successful drawees and outline meeting dates, rules, and historical context. Supervisor Caldwell also coordinated with acting Conflict Section Manager Waddell and Carnivore Section Manager Simek about future spring bear hunt efforts, depredation permit forms, and applied quality assurance measures. Draft materials were submitted to Olympia for review.

General Wildlife Conflict Management: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman responded to several elk-related nuisance injured wildlife reports this week. Biologist Smith met with landowners regarding elk damage to grass crops in the Enumclaw area. DPCA requirements, landowner damage permits, and the use of master hunters were all discussed. Smith also coordinated with the Mount Rainier Elk Foundation regarding fencing repair and construction by volunteers. Smith continued to maintain cameras monitoring elk activity near Enumclaw and Maple Valley.

Wildlife Areas

Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Management Plan Update Process: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm coordinated with planning team members to advance the progress on the Wildlife Area Management Plan update process. Manager Boehm participated in a planning team work session, and also participated in two conference calls focusing on the plan in general and the dog training subgroup progress.

Agricultural Lease Renewals: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm submitted two agricultural lease renewal packages to Olympia for management review and signatures. Portions of Ebey Island and Cherry Valley are up for renewal, and will be presented to the public using the new Agricultural Lease Public Process.

Private Lands/Access Management

Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program Quality Assurance, Control, and Analysis: Private Lands Supervisory Biologist Caldwell and Private Lands Biologist Wingard coordinated on site improvement feedback from hunters during the 2016-17 waterfowl hunting season. Biologist Wingard took considerable time this year to record issues and plans to tackle them next year to ensure improved quality assurance and user satisfaction at Waterfowl Quality Hunt sites in Region 4. Natural Resource Technicians Otto and Deyo began breakdown of 70 Waterfowl Quality Hunt program units across Whatcom, Skagit, and Snohomish counties. Biologist Wingard organized and entered data collected this waterfowl season at Waterfowl Quality Hunt unit sites.

Landowner Payment Forms: Natural Resource Technicians Otto and Deyo and Biologist Wingard made contact with landowners to sign payment forms and see how their experience with the Waterfowl Quality Hunt program went. Landowners were pleased with the program and the Region 4 Private Lands Access Program and are looking forward to re-enrolling next year. All landowner payment forms for the Waterfowl Quality Hunt program have been signed and are on their way to Olympia for payment.

Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordinator

Hunter Education Instructor Support: Hunter Education and Volunteer Coordinator Steven Dazey activated 15 new classes. Dazey also mailed three new instructor applicant packets. Dazey conducted two teaching team evaluations, completed an inventory transfer of firearms to an instructor, and did an inventory check of another instructor. Dazey also assisted an instructor with retrieving his username and password from the Kalkomey site.

Master Hunter Permit Program (MHPP): Hunter Education and Volunteer Coordinator Dazey sent out reminders to all master hunters and master hunter applicants about the four upcoming master hunter orientations. Dazey answered many questions from applicants about the MHPP. Questions regarded volunteer service, COURT, and the application process.

Hunter Education: Hunter Education and Volunteer Coordinator Dazey answered questions from people seeking information on hunter education classes. Since during the first part of the year many instructors are still scheduling classes, Dazey advised the prospective students to continue to check the website, as classes are being added on a regular basis.

Terry Hoffer Award: Hunter Education and Volunteer Coordinator Dazey sent out a reminder about the upcoming deadline for Terry Hoffer Award nominations. So far, 15 well deserving nominations have been received. Dazey also updated the information matrix and scoring matrix for those nominations received to date. Dazey also assisted an instructor with retrieving class information for a nomination he is planning to submit.

National Hunting and Fishing Day (NHFD): Hunter Education and Volunteer Coordinator Dazey secured the participation of the Washington Ornamental Game Bird Breeders' Association for the NHFD event. They are planning to bring several display items, including ornamental game birds. They present every year at the Puyallup fair and are always a popular stop for youth and adults.

GOAL 4: SUPPORTING OUR WORKFORCE, IMPROVING BUSINESS PROCESSES, AND INVESTING IN TECHNOLOGY

Wildlife Management

District 7 Assistant District Biologist Interviews: District 13 personnel travelled to Ephrata and assisted with interviews for this vacant position. A good pool of candidates was interviewed and our district appreciated the opportunity to work with staff across the mountains and learn more about issues in Region 2.

REGION 5

No report submitted this week.

REGION 6

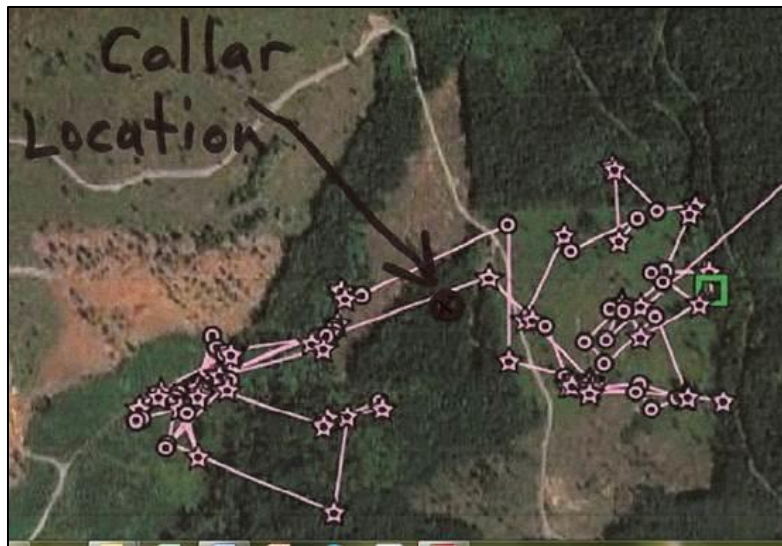
GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Deer Project – Collar Deployment: Assistant District Biologist Ament spent some time on February 4 deploying the collar for Doe 11517 (551PYF) back out in the field to try and still allow some monitoring of her 2016 collared fawn 5436 (781PYF). This doe was harvested by a tribal member at the end of December. She reviewed the doe movements on the Vectronics website for the few weeks before the doe was harvested. The doe had been using two distinct areas on DNR land. Biologist Ament did confirm a live signal for the fawn. She spent quite some time with triangulation efforts using the handheld receiver and antenna. She was able to get fairly close to the fawn and then found a good location to place the collar.

Collar Monitoring and Downloads: After deploying the doe collar, Assistant District Biologist Ament monitored signals for two other does that were collared in 2015. She also monitored the signals for the two remaining fawns collared in 2016 and one fawn collared in 2015. All signals detected signified that each animal was still alive. She downloaded GPS and Activity data from one of the collared does. Researcher Rice was notified that the collar was back in the field and was updated on the status of other collared does and fawns.

Doe collar location within home range of the harvested doe and her surviving fawn



Bald Eagle Exhibition Permit

Issued: Assistant District

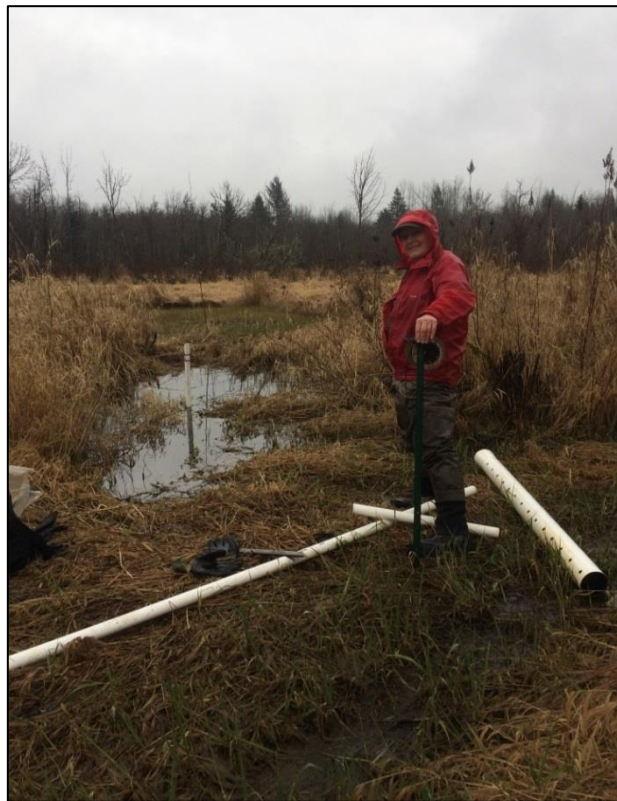
Biologist Ament spent time back in December completing all needed paperwork to renew a permit she had acquired from USFWS to possess an adult bald eagle mount. A renewal application and other supplemental information was completed and sent to the Migratory Bird Permit office in Portland. She received the renewal permit from USFWS. This permit will expire on March 31, 2019. Biologist Ament will provide a copy of the permit to the Director of the Dungeness River Audubon Center. This facility is visited by approximately 16,000 people

every year. This mounted bald eagle has served as an exceptional tool to educate the public on the biology and management of bald eagles.

Oregon Spotted Frog: Biologist Tirhi and volunteer Terry installed water level and temperature loggers in Salmon Creek and the south wetlands at the Salmon Creek oviposition (egg-laying) location. Spotted frog breeding habitat is threatened by invasive reed canary grass at several locations, including Salmon Creek. Plots where canary grass is mowed were installed at this site several years ago to provide adequate breeding habitat for spotted frogs. Biologists installed the water level loggers in order to monitor the effect of changing water levels and temperatures on the spotted frog's use of the plots as part of the ongoing research.



Volunteer Terry installing covering PVC sleeve



Biologist Tirhi with installed Salmon Creek water level/temperature logging station in background

Glaucous Gulls Mortality Event: Biologist Butler, Biologist Tirhi, and Wildlife Veterinarian Haman continued to respond to reports of sick and dead gulls in the Commencement Bay area this week. The initial reports were received Monday, January 23 from staff members at the Port of Tacoma, with additional reports coming from other areas, including Owen Beach, along Ruston Way, Brown's Point, Redondo Beach, and Vashon Island. Since the initial report, the number of reports has tapered off and there have been no new reports of recent sick or dead gulls since January 31. In total, 30 gulls have been admitted into wildlife rehab centers and an estimated 50 gulls have died. The sick gulls exhibit varying degrees of paralysis, with many unable to move their legs and some unable to move their wings as well. The cause of this is still

unknown, but WDFW will be receiving the diagnostic lab results soon. The public is urged to continue reporting any sick or dead gulls to WDFW by calling WILDCOMM at 1-877-933-9847.

Snowy Plover: Biologist Sundstrom completed the winter snowy plover survey data forms and has submitted them to USFWS. Sundstrom has not been able to review the banded birds observed by her and by the USFWS surveyors at Leadbetter to know if any birds were double-counts. Without this important cross-checking method, the data is to be considered “unofficial” until this process is completed. The unofficial number of over-wintering snowy plovers for the areas Sundstrom surveyed (all outer beach areas from Copalis Spit south to the North Jetty in Ocean Shores, Damon Point, Oyhut Spit, Midway Beach, which includes the outer beach from Bonge Road south to Washaway Beach, and Graveyard Spit) was 26. Plovers were found at two locations: Ocean Shores and Midway Beach.

GOAL 2: PROVIDE SUSTAINABLE FISHING, HUNTING AND OTHER WILDLIFE-RELATED RECREATIONAL AND COMMERCIAL EXPERIENCES

Wildlife Management

White River Elk Herd Technical Committee (WREHTC): Biologist Tirhi represented District 11 at the annual WREHTC meeting hosted by the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe (MIT). The meeting is an opportunity for WDFW, MIT, DNR, Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), USFS, MRNP, and Hancock biologists to come together and review data and plan management for that portion of the North Rainier Elk Herd that uses the White River. Topics covered included hunting statistics, an update on the North Rainier Elk Herd Plan, elk winter feeding, surveys and design, habitat management, winter road closures for elk, predator interactions, and elk hoof disease. The Muckleshoots have been conducting significant elk research for several years and have been a primary source of data for North Herd planning and this meeting.

Dusky Goose Hunter Checks: Biologist Sundstrom spent a day removing 24 goose hunter signs that had been posted on public lands from Ocean Shores to Chinook to Oakville and all points in-between. The late goose hunting season, which begins February 11, is for hunting on private lands only, so only a select few private land holdings under agreement with WDFW will still have the signs until the season ends on March 8.

GOAL 3: PROMOTE A HEALTHY ECONOMY, PROTECT COMMUNITY CHARACTER, MAINTAIN AN OVERALL HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE, AND DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE

Wildlife Management

Dusky Goose Survey: Biologist Sundstrom conducted the first survey for the month of February in Grays Harbor County and the northern portion of Pacific County, while Biologist Novack worked the southern portion of Pacific County. The table below summarizes those observations.

2/1/17	Cackler	# Banded	Alentian	# Banded	Tav/Lesser	# Banded	Dusky	# Banded	Western	# Banded	Vancouver	# Banded	GWF	Snow	Unknown/Other	Totals
Location																
Grays Harbor County	240		6		519		240	2	442	2	0		1	0	712	2,160
North Pacific County	754		10		696		1,652	18	54		0		1	0	750	3,917
Totals:	994	0	16	0	1,215	0	1,892	20	496	2	0	0	2	0	1,462	6,077

Additionally, Sundstrom completed and compiled the survey data from January 18, which is in the table below.

1/18/17	Cackler	# Banded	Alentian	# Banded	Tav/Lesser	# Banded	Dusky	# Banded	Western	# Banded	Vancouver	# Banded	GWF	Snow	Unknown/Other	Totals
Location																
Grays Harbor County	434		6		837		375		541	2	0		8	6	232	2,439
North Pacific County	525		0		421		1299	6	4		0		0	0	200	2,449
Totals:	959	0	6	0	1,258	0	1,674	6	545	2	0	0	8	6	432	4,888

Swan Line Strike: Sundstrom responded to a phone call from Grays Harbor PUD regarding an electrocuted swan in the Brady area. This is only the first swan known to have hit the powerlines this season. Extremely high wind gusts just prior to the strike are likely the cause of the bird coming in contact with the lines.

An unfortunate line-strike victim: an adult trumpeter swan

